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# MERCED COUNTY



## GENERAL PLAN

Vol. I- Plan Introduction and Land Use Element

Vol. II Circulation Element

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GENERAL PLAN

VOL. I - PLAN INTRODUCTION AND LAND USE ELEMENT  
VOL. II - CIRCULATION ELEMENT

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Adopted:

Planning Commission: September 27, 1978

Board of Supervisors: November 21, 1978





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802      ATWATER #2                      Adopted, Board of Supervisors   11/21/78

803      MERCED #1                      Adopted, Board of Supervisors,   8/29/78

804      MERCED #2                      Adopted, Board of Supervisors   8/29/78

805      MERCED #3                      Adopted, Board of Supervisors   8/29/78

806      SNELLING #1                      Adopted, Board of Supervisors   11/14/78

807      SNELLING #2                      Adopted, Board of Supervisors   11/14/78

900      H-I CENTERS - Specific Urban Development Plans

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902      I-5 - MERCEY SPRINGS ROAD      Adopted, Board of Supervisors   11/14/78

903      I-5 - HWY 152                      Adopted, Board of Supervisors   2/21/78

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100 **GENERAL PLAN INTRODUCTION**

101 **PURPOSE**

The General Plan, with its elements, is designed to provide a comprehensive framework for the long-term management of those lands directly under Merced County control and to promote coordination with other agencies for overall growth and development.

Chapter 4 of the State Planning Act enables cities and counties to regulate the use of land in order to protect the public health, safety, and welfare.

Section 65860 of the Government Code requires that zoning ordinances be compatible with the objectives, policies, general land use and programs specified in the General Plan or elements thereof. Notification of this consistency must be furnished the State of California on a year-to-year basis.

a. County or city zoning ordinances shall be consistent with the General Plan of the county or city by January 1, 1974. A zoning ordinance shall be consistent with a city or county general plan only if:

the city or county has officially adopted such a plan; and,  
the various land uses authorized by the ordinance are compatible with the objectives, policies, general land uses and programs specified in such a plan.

b. Any resident or property owner within a city or county, as the case may be, may bring an action in the superior court to enforce compliance with the provisions above. Any such action or proceedings shall be governed by Chapter 2 (commencing with Section 1084) of Title I or Part 3 of the Code of Civil Procedure. Any action or proceedings taken pursuant to the provisions of this subsection must be taken within six months of January 1, 1974 or within 90 days of enactment of any new zoning ordinance or the amendment of existing ordinance as to said amendments.





- c. In the event that a zoning ordinance becomes inconsistent with a general plan or by reason of amendment to such a plan, or to any element of such a plan, such zoning ordinance shall be amended within a reasonable time so that it is consistent with the general plan as amended.





Merced County is centrally located in the State and is in the agriculturally rich Central Valley. With its 1983 square mile land area and a population of approximately 120,000, it has become one of the highly productive agricultural counties of the state.

There are six unincorporated cities in the County and some seventeen varying sized unincorporated urban areas, and they are separated by non-intensive rural areas.

The City of Merced is the County seat with a population of approximately 30,000. The City of Atwater, with a population of approximately 15,000, is the location of Castle Air Force Base. These two cities and their resultant fringe areas create the largest urban area within the County and have a continuing high demand for the conversion of non-intensive lands to intensive uses. The urban areas of the County contain approximately 70 percent of the population of the County.

Notwithstanding the fact that much of the population is concentrated within the varying sized urban areas or centers, agriculture is still the most significant and influential force in the County.



The General Plan shall consist of development policies and shall include objectives, principles, standards, and plan proposals. The plan shall include, as a minimum, the following nine (9) interrelated elements that are considered mandatory by the State of California:

- a. Land Use Element - Designates the proposed general location and extent of the uses of the land for housing, business, industry, open space, including agriculture, natural resources and support systems for services. In varying degrees, all elements of the plan are supportive of this element. Adopted June 22, 1965 (Revised hereby)
- b. Circulation Element - Is a twin element of the land use element in that location, the density and intensity of land uses, their traffic generation, and their required facilities must be considered to provide for safe and efficient flow of people and commodities. Adopted January 29, 1963 (Revised hereby)
- c. Housing Element - Consists of standards and plans for the improvement of housing and for provision of adequate sites for housing. This element must make adequate provisions for the housing needs of all economic segments of the County. Adopted June 12, 1973
- d. Conservation Element - Relates to the conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources, including water and its hydraulic force, forest, soils, rivers, and other waters, minerals, and other natural resources. Adopted September 4, 1973
- e. Open Space Element - Complements the conservation element and is combined with that element. Open Space land is any parcel of land or water which is essentially unimproved and is for the preservation of natural resources, managed production resources, outdoor recreation, public health and safety. Adopted September 4, 1973.





- f.            Seismic Element - Identifies and appraises seismic hazards and requires the County to take them into account in their planning program and subsequent decisions. The basic objective is to reduce loss of life, injuries, damage to property and economic and social dislocation resulting from future earthquakes  
Adopted April 9, 1974
- g.            Safety Element - Concerns itself with pollution, nuclear fallout, geological hazards, fire, floods, with secondary attention given to and coordinated with the seismic and noise elements. Supplements the land use element with respect to the protection and safety requirements of actual land uses. Adopted October 15, 1973
- h.            Noise Element - Utilizes state noise control guidelines which quantifies the community noise environment in terms of noise exposure contours for both near and long-term levels of growth and traffic activity. This information then becomes a guideline for use in the development of the land use element to achieve noise compatible land uses. Adopted September 16, 1975
- i.            Scenic Highway Element - Provides a guide for the development and establishment of scenic routes and the regulations thereof. The purpose is to create a scenic route system with the means to enhance and preserve the scenic qualities of the natural scenic areas adjacent to and visible from said highways.  
Adopted March 18, 1975



a. Land Use Element - The Planning Commission shall hold a special meeting at four-month intervals, April, August and December of each calendar year and shall:

(1) Review the zoning of the County as to consistency with the element and submit a report of fact to the Board of Supervisors.

(2) Hold public hearings on all zoning applications that are not consistent with the element.

(3) Hold public hearings on all proposed amendments to the element.

No application for rezoning inconsistent with the Land Use Element shall be considered except at a special meeting and no such application shall be approved without parallel amendment of the Land Use Element in order to maintain zoning-land use consistency.

b. Other Mandatory Elements - While these elements also are under continuing review of the planning staff, specific proposals for their amendment shall be presented to the Planning Commission at the end of each calendar year.

c. County Review of Present County Ordinances - The staff, Planning commission, and Board of Supervisors shall undertake the continuing evaluation of all ordinances relating to the implementation of the general plan and establish such hearings as are necessary to modify such ordinances as may be deemed appropriate.

d. Pending State and Federal Legislation - The staff and Planning Commission shall monitor pending State and Federal legislation in terms of its effect upon the consistent implementation of the general plan and shall, where appropriate, request the Board of Supervisors to take such action as necessary to effectively support, modify, or oppose such legislation.





200     LAND USE ELEMENT

201     PURPOSE

Land Use considerations are of foremost importance in that they are basic to, and interrelated with, all elements that make up a general plan.

Section 65302 (a) of the California Government Code defines the requirement for a land use element as follows:

"A land use element which designated the proposed general distribution and general location and extent of the uses of the land for housing, business, industry, open space, including agriculture, education, public buildings and grounds, solid and liquid waste disposal facilities, and other categories of public and private uses of land. The land use element shall include a statement of the standards of population density and building intensity recommended for the various districts and other territory covered by the plan. The land use element shall also identify areas covered by the plan which are subject to flooding and shall be reviewed annually with respect to such areas."

In varying degrees, all of the elements of the General Plan will contain objectives and policies which relate to the land use element. Circulation, for example, is one of the determinants as to the form of human settlement and of the uses of the land. Conversely, land use creates the demand for circulation facilities. The safety and seismic elements provide information and policies regarding natural and man-made hazards which need to be recognized in the land use element. Together with the open space element, they define lands to be reserved in a natural state and other lands for urban purposes or for production of food, fiber or minerals. Considered along with the conservation element, they define criteria and standards and identify programs needed to control the impact of man's activities in the natural environment.



The land resource of the County is so vast it is hard to conceive that it will ever become urban in character. However, the natural and managed resource lands are in many cases equally attractive and well suited for intensive development.

Rural character development change is occurring in the urban transition areas in and near Merced and Atwater at a rate that far exceeds other areas of the County. Rural residential development is converting productive, agricultural land in this area to non-agriculture homsites. It has extended into orchards and fields thus highlighting the continued conflict of intensive-non-intensive use of the land. Clear lines have not been drawn between what should be developed for urban uses and what should remain agricultural. Where attempts have been made to define logical and coherent urban transition areas, it has proved difficult to hold the line and in some cases impossible to reverse the previous land use trends that have developed.

Rural life and rural expectations have undergone many changes in recent years. The concept of agriculture-residential use visualizing small acreage with a residence, i. e. , the estate farmer with demand for all adjacent public services has arrived on the scene. In addition, the true rural life and rural expectations of the farm worker and farmer have undergone changes in recent years. With good transportation, reduced hours of farm work because of mechanization, and the general increase in communications, the farmer no longer lives in semi-isolation of former times. He now wants and demands services for himself and family very compatible to those found in the urban areas. In many ways he has developed a new way of life that must be taken into account during any planning program.





**SCOPE OF THE ELEMENT**

The prime function of this element is the encouragement of land use patterns which are properly responsive to both the characteristics of land and the environmental, economic and social concerns of the people of Merced County. It attempts to recognize primary areas where intensive land use exists or is taking place and establishes an "Urban Centered Concept" (Plate No. 1) utilizing established cities, unincorporated urban communities or centers to accomplish anticipated urban expansion in an orderly manner based on the ability to furnish public services along with land needs based on population demands.

This element encourages cities to plan for realistic urban expansion within their respective urban expansion areas and in coordination with the County. These urban expansion areas should be rezoned so that an individual property owner would have knowledge of land use that would be designated on a certain parcel of land should it be annexed to a city.

In the unincorporated urban communities or centers, the County would be responsible for land use controls that would permit orderly expansion.

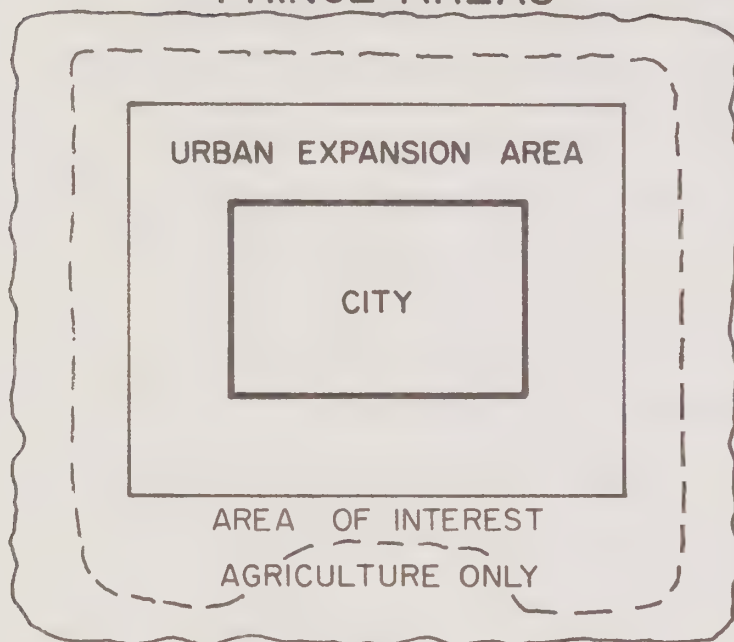
"Urban" or "Urban Development" as used in this element relates to intensive land uses such as residential, commercial or industrial uses that are common to a city or an established unincorporated community.



# URBAN CENTERED CONCEPT

WITH INTENSIVE LAND USES

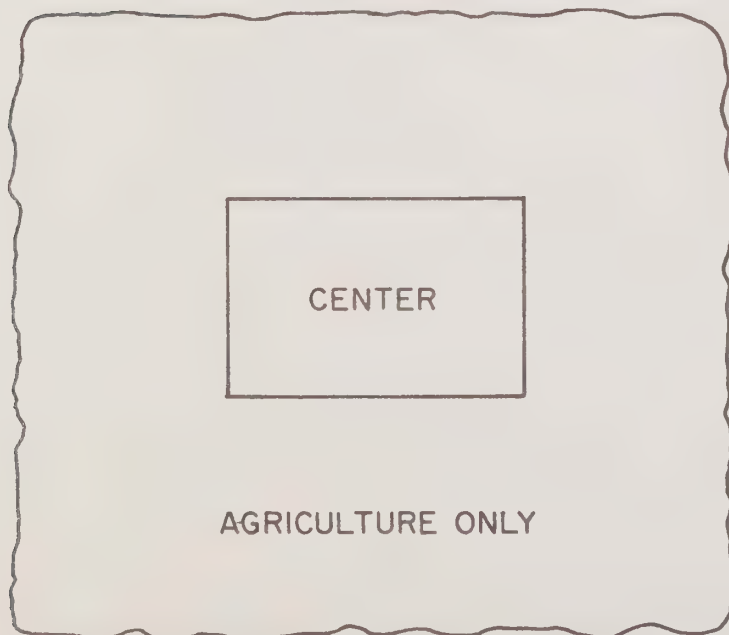
CITY  
FRINGE AREAS



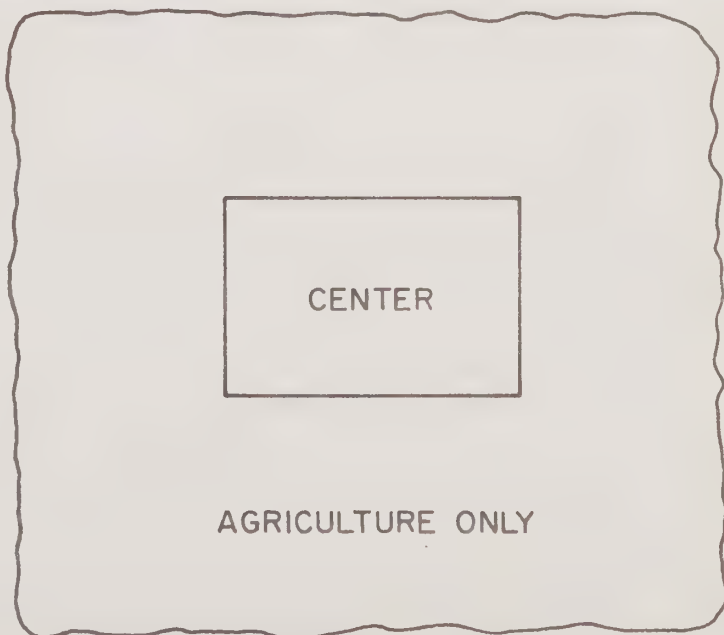
UNINCORPORATED  
COMMUNITIES



RURAL RESIDENTIAL  
CENTERS



HIGHWAY INTERCHANGE  
CENTERS







The foregoing Urban Centered Concept (Plate No. 1) is intended to apply to land which is undeveloped but within the reasonable projected limits of urban expansion. The purpose is to insure that (1) growth occurs in an orderly and logical manner, (2) land is utilized efficiently, (3) agricultural operations are not eliminated prematurely, (4) the County's planning efforts are complementary to those of the cities, and (5) urban development occurs where proper public services are available. Urban development should be allowed to occur only within adopted urban expansion areas of cities, unincorporated communities or designated centers.

This type of an approach to controlling intensive use of land is mutually advantageous to the city or unincorporated area, the land holder, and the County. This concept allows the city an approved basis on which to project its future growth patterns and need for urban services, at the same time eliminating undesired fringe uses and potential County islands. The land holder, likewise, is more able to project the time period within which his land may fall within appropriate urban growth patterns. It is also equally advantageous to the County due to the substantial reduction of tax supported services and the premature development of agricultural or open space lands.



204     OBJECTIVES

- a.        Recognize the need to protect the natural environs of the County as identified in the Open Space and Conservation Elements.
- b.        Recognize factors affecting development, such as high water tables, poor soil percolations and unavailability of urban services.
- c.        Discourage premature and uncoordinated division of land which forces the early cessation of valid agricultural use and does not provide parcels which can be easily accommodated by orderly urban growth.
- d.        Recognize that cities and county must coordinate their efforts to regulate the expanding urban fringe areas to provide for an orderly development policy.
- e.        Establish land use procedures that complement, rather than compete with, the land use element of incorporated cities.
- f.        Recognize unincorporated communities or centers as viable urban developments with provisions for reasonable expansion within the capabilities of the area.
- g.        Re-evaluate previously designated land uses for valid relationship to community needs and consider possible reclassification to other use designations more consistent with the needs and limitations of the area of concern.
- h.        Recognize and develop land use procedures to accommodate the ever enlarging demand for rural residential development.
- i.        Develop procedures which can adequately cope with the pressures for commercial and residential development at major interstate interchanges.





# MERCED COUNTY POPULATION PROJECTION

PLATE 2

CITY	APRIL 1 1970 (a)	DEC 31 1971 (b)	DEC 31 1972 (b)		JULY 1 1973 (b)	JAN 1 1974 (b)	JAN 1 1975 (b)	SEPT 11 1975 (c)				JAN 1 1985 (d)	JAN 1995 (d)	
ATWATER	11,640	12,050	12,291		14,300	14,600	14,800	14,429				19,775	25,350	
DOS PALOS	2,496	2,724	2,778		2,860	2,830	2,800	2,854				3,475	3,950	
GUSTINE	2,793	2,893	2,951		2,893	2,900	2,910	2,960				3,650	4,250	
LIVINGSTON	2,588	2,780	2,836		3,300	3,370	3,340	3,850				5,500	8,000	
LOS BANOS	9,188	10,032	10,233		10,100	10,000	10,000	9,341				11,875	14,625	
MERCED	22,670	26,191	26,715		28,000	28,500	29,450	30,112				42,512	60,017	
SUB TOTAL	51,375	56,670	57,804		61,453	62,200	63,300	63,546				86,787	116,292	
UNINCORPORATED URBAN AREAS														
BALLICO								160				215	290	
CELESTE								290				388	525	
CRESSEY								190				240	320	
DELHI								1,851				2,490	3,350	
DOS PALOS "Y"								290				385	520	
EL NIDO								71				190	230	
HILMAR-IRWIN								1,425				1,910	2,560	
FRANKLIN								2,060				2,775	3,325	
LE GRAND								800				1,050	1,400	
MIDWAY								530				710	950	
N. DOS PALOS								110				150	200	
PLANADA								2,500				3,420	4,600	
SANTA NELLA								120				160	210	
SNELLING								234				315	345	
SO. DOS PALOS								540				725	970	
STEVINSON								120				155	200	
TUTTLE								150				203	275	
VOLTA								145				191	260	
WINTON								3,765				5,110	6,800	
SUB TOTALS								15,341				20,782	27,330	
REMAINDER OF COUNTY	53,254	51,485	52,515		50,647	55,300	56,100	39,896				39,822	36,725	
GRAND TOTALS	104,629	108,155	110,319		112,100	117,500	119,400	118,783				147,391	180,547	

(a) U. S. CENSUS

(b)

(c)

(d)

(b) State Finance Dept.

(c) Special Census

(d) Merced County Planning Dept.



POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Merced County's population growth from 1950 to 1976 shows an increase of 51,000. Since 1970 the rural area population has declined 3,000. Analysis indicates that some 54,000 people of the approximate 120,000 present population have been absorbed into urban areas or their fringe areas. This population increase has been accommodated by conversion of non-intensive agricultural land to intensive residential, commercial and industrial uses.

The Population Growth Chart (Plate No. 2) projects a population of 147,391 by 1985 and a population of 180,547 by 1995.

Population growth creates the need for land to accommodate the resultant housing and service needs of the new population itself. If a viable agricultural base is to be maintained in Merced County, then planning with well defined controls for a continuing urbanization must be exercised to minimize the impact on this base.





Standards, as shown on Plate No. 3, provide for various residential densities and are identified according to use.

General standards for qualifying a low density determination throughout the County shall apply as follows:

- a. Within the adopted urban expansion area of incorporated cities, low density is considered five (5) dwelling units or less per net acre.
- b. Within the boundary of any unincorporated community and its urban expansion area, low density is considered five (5) dwelling units or less per net acre.
- c. Within the boundary of a Highway Interchange Center, low density is considered one (1) dwelling unit per net acre, except when a Highway Interchange Center is within the boundary of an Unincorporated Community Urban Expansion Area. Then, Section 206 b. above shall apply.
- d. Within the boundary of a Rural Residential Center, low density is considered one (1) dwelling unit per net acre.
- e. Outside the boundary of any adopted urban expansion area or center, low density is considered one (1) dwelling unit per net acre.



## RESIDENTIAL INTENSITY STANDARDS

USE	MINIMUM AREA PER ONE DWELLING UNIT	MINIMUM LOT SIZE	MAXIMUM NO. OF ONE FAM. DWELLINGS PER LOT	MAXIMUM NO. OF ONE FAM. DWELLINGS PER ACRE	POPULATION ESTIMATE PER LOT	POPULATION ESTIMATE PER ACRE
Agricultural- Residential	1 net acre	1 net acre	1	1	3.5	3.5
One-Family Residential	6,500 sq. ft. *1 net acre	6,500 sq. ft. *1 net acre	1	4.5	3.5	16.0
			1	1	3.5	3.5
Two-Family Residential	3,250 sq. ft. *1 net acre	6,500 sq. ft. *1 net acre	2	10	7.0	35.0
			2	1	3.5	7.0
Limited Multiple- Family Residential	2,000 sq. ft.	6,500 sq. ft.	3	15	10.5	52.5
Multiple-Family	1,000 sq. ft.	6,000 sq. ft.	6	33	21.0	115.5

\*Where sewer and/or water facilities are developed on lot or parcel and approved by the County Health Department.



## 300 INTENSIVE DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

### 301.1 INTRODUCTION

Population and economic growth will create a demand for conversion of additional land to urban intensive uses. The intensive development policies of this element are designed to manage anticipated urban growth by directing intensive land development to existing cities, unincorporated communities and to other substantially committed rural residential and interchange centers that can accommodate such development in a planned orderly manner. Basic policies and procedures are established for the development of these urban areas and reflect a commitment of the County to conserve natural and managed resources while directing growth and enhancing economic development.

### 301.2 URBAN EXPANSION AREAS

Urban expansion areas are defined as those areas established to permit the orderly urban expansion of incorporated and unincorporated communities of the County of Merced. They are to be determined by the basic land use needs of each respective community using specific adopted goals of the community based on projected population for selected time frames, i. e., immediate, short-term, and long-term projections.

### 301.3 AREAS OF INTEREST

Areas of interest are applicable only to cities and are defined as those areas with non-intensive land uses outside of city urban expansion areas, but within a reasonable distance of a city, the conversion of which to intensive land uses could foreseeably affect either the health, welfare and safety of the citizens or the economic programs of a city.

### 301.4 PROCEDURE FOR URBAN EXPANSION AREA DETERMINATIONS

- a. Survey urban and non-urban use land within the established community:
  - (1) Total acreage of urban use land
  - (2) Total acreage of non-urban use land (two acres or larger with no development)





(3) Total of each category of land use: Residential, Commercial, Industrial, etc., within urban and non-urban land.

b. Accommodation of straight line population projections based on Land Use Element projections.

(1) Determine the land use capacity of the existing urban and non-urban use areas to accommodate a percentage of the projected population.

(2) Subtract the above percentage from the total projected population.

(3) Cities Only: Add acreage, over and above that needed for the projected population to satisfy specific community social, economic and physical goals as identified (in a city's current adopted general plan).

c. Accommodation of the remaining projected population within the urban expansion area:

(1) Survey non-urban use land immediately adjacent to the urban community boundary.

(2) Identify land needed to accommodate that percentage of projected population that could not be accommodated within the existing urban community boundary.

(3) Identify land needed to provide public services and commercial-industrial use as equated to projected population requirements. Cities Only: Will identify those lands needed to satisfy specific community goals.

d. Indicate time frame for utilization of land designated as Urban Expansion Area within City Fringe Areas.

(1) Urban Improvement Area - That portion of the urban expansion area that can be immediately furnished all city services and that shall be divided or developed only within the city upon annexation.



(2) 1985 Short-Term Urban Expansion Area - That portion of the urban expansion area proposed for development wherein lands can be accommodated with City services by 1985 and said lands may be developed within the County but as prezoned by the City and to City standards.

(3) 1995 Long-Term Urban Expansion Area - That portion of the urban expansion area proposed for development wherein lands can be accommodated with City services by 1995 and said lands may be developed within the County but as prezoned by the City and to City standards. Development to take place only after the 1985 urban area is substantially developed.

- e. Indicate time frame for utilization of land designated Urban Expansion Area for Unincorporated Communities.

(1) 1995 Long-Term Urban Expansion Area is the only time frame expansion area for development and said lands so designated in this expansion area must be annexed to an established service district or center prior to development.

301.5 COUNTY-- PUBLIC ENTITY COORDINATION

- a. Population Projection  
Zoning or Prezoning  
Urban Expansion Determination
- b. Adoption of Urban Expansion Area by a City as part of their General Plan -- Adoption of all Urban Expansion Areas by the County as Specific Urban Development Plans.

- c. Resolutions of Agreement (City-County Only)

(1) Prezoning

(a) Cities will initiate prezoning on all land within the adopted urban expansion area and prezoning will be coordinated with the County Planning Commission. Prezoning of the City shall prevail for all development that takes place with or without annexation to the City,





(2) Annexation - Non Annexation

(a) Land within the Urban Improvement Area shall not be divided or developed unless it annexes to the City.

(3) Area of Interest

(a) As part of the urban-centered concept, Cities shall be formally notified of all conversion requests to change the use of land from non-intensive to intensive in this area.

(4) Hearing Dates

(a) County or City shall schedule hearing dates for items of mutual concern to allow for sufficient time for notification and formal response by respective legislative bodies.



302 **CITY FRINGE AREAS**

302. 01 **URBAN EXPANSION AREA**

Unincorporated areas adjacent to a city (holding areas to accommodate a set population based on a time frame to furnish public utilities) are a primary concern to the County and respective Cities in that without a coordinated specific plan of development that each adhere to, these areas may be developed with little regard for the problems that such development brings, such as very irregular boundaries caused by leap-frog development, confused service patterns and over-lapping jurisdictional agencies.

In addition, those unincorporated lands adjacent to a City's Urban Expansion Area have the same problems and should be maintained free of new urban development until such time as a City has the ability to provide services for them.

302. 02 **OBJECTIVES**

- a. Maintain the planned expansion areas of cities free of uncoordinated urban development.
- b. Maintain land use regulations within the City Urban Expansion Area (Coordinated with the City) that will enhance orderly expansion of urban intensive use.
- c. Maintain agricultural use on all prime agricultural land in areas immediately adjacent to but outside the Urban Expansion Area until the land becomes qualified for urban use.

302. 03 **POLICIES**

- a. The County will, in conjunction with the Cities, establish and maintain land use controls on all unincorporated lands within the Urban Expansion Area as jointly adopted by the County and City. These controls will be consistent with the respective County and City Land Use Elements.



- b. Within the Urban Improvement Area of the Urban Expansion Area, the County will:
- (1) Refer all applicants for subdivision, rezoning and commercial-industrial Conditional Use Permits to the respective City for annexation.
  - (2) Maintain all existing agricultural uses until a use change is mutually agreed upon by the County and City.
  - (3) Refer all lot divisions smaller than twenty acres to the City for annexation.
- c. Within the 1985 Short-Term Urban Expansion Area, the County will:
- (1) Require land proposed for development to be annexed to a City when public sewage and water are available.
  - (2) Permit land to be developed in the County when sewage and/or water are not available if the City does not wish to annex, i. e. , first refusal, but as prezoned by the City and public improvements installed to current City standards.
- d. Within the 1995 Long-Term Urban Expansion Area, the County will:
- (1) Require land proposed for development to be annexed to a City when public sewage and water are available.
  - (2) Permit land to be developed in the County when sewage and/or water are not available if the City does not wish to annex, i. e. , first refusal, but as prezoned by the City and public improvements installed to current City standards.
  - (3) Development will take place in this area only after the 1985 Urban Expansion Area is substantially developed.
- e. Within those unincorporated lands adjacent to an adopted Urban Expansion Area, identified as Area of Interest, the County will:
- (1) Maintain zoning on existing or proposed developments consistent with the Land Use Element.





(2) Maintain zoning on undeveloped or underdeveloped land to preclude further urban development except when subdivision, rezoning, or conditional use proposals on residential, commercial, or industrial properties are consistent with the Land Use Element. Conditions of approval will require approved sewer and water service and improvement of all roadways providing access to the development, as if they were part of the development, to the nearest fully developed street.

(3) Proposed lot divisions that create parcels smaller than 20 acres will be granted only when the land in question qualifies for conversion to intensive use. (Section 402)

(4) Notify each respective City of all requests to convert lands of a non-intensive use to an intensive use.

- f. The County Planning Department will review all annexation proposals submitted to the Local Agency Formation Commission and prepare a recommendation for each proposal. Formal protests will be made when the purpose of the annexation is inconsistent with the adopted Land Use Element of the General Plan.

302.04 ALTERNATIVE POLICIES FOR CITIES WITH ONLY ONE URBAN EXPANSION AREA

- a. The Urban Improvement, 1985 Short-Term and 1995 Long-Term Urban Expansion Areas are combined within one Urban Expansion Boundary and said boundary will encompass all land projected for urban growth of a City until year 1995.
- b. Within the Urban Expansion Boundary, the County will:
- (1) Refer all applicants for subdivision, rezoning and commercial-Industrial Conditional Use Permits to the City for annexation.
  - (2) Maintain all existing land uses until the area is planned by the City. At that time, make land uses and zoning consistent with the City Land Use Element.



- (3) Permit development of a single-family residence on an existing lot of record when permitted by zoning ordinance.
- (4) Refer all lot divisions smaller than twenty acres to the City for annexation.
- (5) Not amend the boundaries of a Rural Residential Center without mutual agreement between the City and the County.
- (6) Permit land to be developed in the County when a city waives annexation; however, public improvements shall be to current city standards.

c. Within those unincorporated lands adjacent to the Urban Expansion Boundary, identified as the Area of Interest, the County will:

- (1) Maintain zoning on the existing or approved developments that are consistent with the Land Use Element.
- (2) Maintain appropriate zoning on undeveloped or underdeveloped land to preclude further urban development until the land is placed within an urban expansion boundary.
- (3) Not permit lot splits less than 20 acres.
- (4) Notify the City of all requests to convert lands of a non-intensive use to an intensive use.
- (5) Discourage the formation of new special districts.

d. Within the Rural Residential Centers located in the Area of Interest, the County will:

- (1) Not permit a parcel or lot size less than one (1) net acre.
- (2) As part of subdivision or parcel map approval, require:
  - a. Conformance to an adopted Rural Residential Center local street plan and the adopted County Circulation element.
  - b. All newly created lots to front on a public street and improved to County Standards.



- c. Dedication of land for the logical extension of streets so that adjacent parcels of land do not become landlocked.

303 UNINCORPORATED COMMUNITIES

303.01 URBAN EXPANSION AREAS

Unincorporated urban communities in Merced County have a substantial urban population and exist as separate, distinct communities surrounded by agriculture and other open space uses and with the similar problems of incorporated cities in providing basic urban services.

Sound land use management requires compact urban boundaries and urban expansion areas (holding areas to accommodate a set population based on time frame to furnish public utilities) to minimize premature intrusion of urban development into productive agricultural areas. Land use controls are an integral part of management in that they can be used to permit an orderly expansion of these communities if they are correlated with the projected population of the community and the communities ability to provide basic services.

303.02 OBJECTIVES

- a. Restrict the intrusion of urban development into prime agricultural areas.
- b. Concentrate urban development within the existing community boundary and its adopted sphere of influence.
- c. Provide appropriate public services for orderly development.

303.03 POLICIES

- a. Within the urban community and its adopted urban expansion area:
  - (1) Maintain zoning consistent with the specific development plan.
  - (2) Residential intensity standards classifying five residential dwelling units or less per net acre as low density shall apply.
  - (3) Sewer and water service shall be required for all subdivisions.
- b. Within those lands immediately adjacent to the urban expansion boundary:





(1) Maintain existing agricultural uses until orderly urban expansion occurs.

(2) Maintain zoning on undeveloped and underdeveloped land to preclude further urban development except when subdivision, rezoning, or conditional use proposals on residential, commercial or industrial properties are consistent with the land use element. Conditions of approval will require approved sewer and water service and improvement of all roadways providing access to the development, as if they were part of the development, to the nearest fully developed public street. Applications will have the appropriate County Department's or Special District's certification that public services are available.

(3) Residential intensity standards classifying one residential dwelling unit per net acre as low density shall apply.

(4) Proposed lot divisions that create parcels smaller than 20 acres will be granted only when the land in question qualifies for conversion to intensive use. (Section 402)



304 RURAL RESIDENTIAL CENTERS (AREAS)

304.01 INTRODUCTION

Rural residential centers are designed to satisfy the demands of those people who wish to live on a parcel of land one (1) net acre or larger in a rural setting and are willing to accept less than the full range of urban services.

An increased demand for rural residential living causes large acreages of open space agricultural land to be converted to mini-estate rural homesites. Without careful land use management controls, increased public costs are caused from the resultant use demands for increased public services.

Any intrusion into prime agricultural areas causes increased loss of valuable agricultural production and individual properties converted to rural homesites initiates a rippling effect that caused adjoining parcels to be converted to non-agricultural uses.

Changes from agricultural uses to rural homesite acreages reduces the use of surface imported water and increases dependence on wells for both domestic and irrigation uses thus curtailing recharge and increasing withdrawal of underground resources.



304.02      OBJECTIVES

- a.              Manage the expansion of rural residential development and restrict this type of development to defined rural residential centers.
- b.              Restrict the intrusion of rural residential development into prime agricultural areas.
- c.              Permit rural residential development in selected areas where 50% of the land is presently divided into parcels less than 20 acres.
- d.              Maintain a rural character in rural residential centers.
- e.              Prevent degradation of groundwater quality, minimize overdraft of groundwater supply and minimize flooding.

304.03      POLICIES

- a.              Subdivision or Parcel Map requests shall cause the applicant to prepare a local street design for the  $\frac{1}{4}$  section within the proposed subdivision is located and said street design shall require the following:
  - (1) Conformance to adopted Rural Residential Center Street and Road Specific Plans.
    - a. Provisions for through local streets connecting to major roads in at least two locations and not more than four locations.
    - b. Cul-de-sac limitation to not exceed more than 660 feet and to serve not more than 12 lots.
    - c. Temporary turn-arounds for stubbed off local streets which cannot be connected to major roads at time of development.
  - (2) All newly created lots are to front on a public street and the public streets shall be improved to County Standards.
  - (3) The dedication of lands for the logical extension of streets so that adjacent parcels of land do not become land locked.
  - (4) All street designs shall be reviewed by the County Engineer prior to Planning Commission consideration.





- b. Minimum lot size for any residential use shall be no less than one (1) net acre and sewage disposal system and water system must be approved by the County Health Department.
- c. Community water systems may be required for fire protection.
- d. Natural water channels shall not be encroached upon or natural flow restricted in such a way as to increase potential flooding damage.
- e. Proposed lot divisions that create parcels smaller than 20 acres will be granted only when the land in question qualifies for conversion to intensive use. (Section 402)
- f. Expansion of rural residential centers or the establishment of new centers may be accomplished by Land Use Element amendment and subject to the land in question qualifying for conversion to intensive use. (Section 402)



305 **HIGHWAY INTERCHANGE CENTERS**

305.01 **INTRODUCTION**

Merced County has two major highways, Highway 99 and Interstate Number 5, both with interchange areas that generate a high vehicular count caused by the demand for service from the traveling public. Specific land use management controls are required to ensure compatibility of uses within interchange centers and adjacent non-intensive rural uses.

305.02 **OBJECTIVES**

- a. Provide the necessary interchange centers with an intensity and design of land use that will not be detrimental to the traffic capacity and safety of the respective interchange areas.
- b. Manage the expansion of these centers in order to reduce public costs.
- c. Restrict the intrusion of development into prime agricultural areas.
- d. Orient all permitted uses in the center to the function of the center.

305.03 **POLICIES**

- a. Subdivision will require approved sewer and water service and improvement of all roadways providing access to the subdivision, as if they were part of the subdivision. Applications will have the appropriate County Department's or Special District's certification that public services are available.
- b. Minimum lot size for any residential use shall be no less than one (1) acre unless public sewer and water is available.
- c. Community water systems may be required for fire protection.
- d. Proposed lot divisions that create parcels smaller than 20 acres will be granted only when the land in question qualifies for conversion to intensive use. (Section 402)



- e.           The establishment, expansion or reduction of an H-I Center boundary must be accomplished by amendment to the Land Use Element except when the boundary falls within an adopted Specific Urban Development Plan of an unincorporated community. In this instance, the Specific Urban Development Plan for the unincorporated community is the vehicle for amendment.





400 NON – INTENSIVE DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

401 INTRODUCTION

Non-intensive use of land deals with that land which should remain primarily open in character. To maintain lands in a non-intensive use permits the survival of the agricultural industry of the County. Also, a commitment for the conservation and preservation of certain types of non-intensive land use has been effected by the Conservation and Open Space Elements adopted as part of the County General Plan.

402 POLICY FOR CONVERSION OF NON-INTENSIVE LANDS

The following criteria has been established and is to be applied to requests for conversion of agricultural or open space land to an intensive use:

(1) Importance: Does the agricultural land have an alternate non-intensive land use available to it?

(2) Limitation: Will an individual waste disposal system contaminate the groundwater table?

(3) Parcel Size: Will the size of the parcels created cause them to be economically unfeasible for agriculture use?

(4) Compatibility: Will a non-agricultural use create conflicts as to compatibility with adjacent agriculture uses?

(5) Soil: Is the soil suitable for agriculture according to soil class?

(6) Access: Will intensive use create dust and pollution detrimental to the existing agricultural uses?

(7) Nature: Will intensive use destroy historical, archaeological, wildlife habitat, or other unique natural features?

(8) Flood: Will intensive use present hazards to public health, welfare and safety?



(9) Water: Will an intensive use require creation of a new community water system?

An affirmative response to any of the listed questions may cause an Environmental Impact Report to be prepared and any significant environmental impact shall negate the conversion attempt unless the following findings are made:

(1) Changes or alterations have been required in, or incorporated into, the project which mitigate or avoid the significant environmental effects thereof as identified in the final EIR.

(2) Such changes or alterations are within the responsibility and jurisdiction of another public agency and not the agency making the finding. Such changes have been adopted by such other agency or can and should be adopted by such other agency.

(3) Specific economic, social, or other considerations make infeasible the mitigation measures or project alternatives identified in the final EIR.



403        AGRICULTURAL

403.01    INTRODUCTION

Most of the valley soils are both highly productive and easily developable to urban, rural residential, and other non-agricultural uses. Continued demands for urban expansion causes many acres of productive agricultural lands to be prematurely converted to non-agricultural uses-- specifically within the fringe areas of urban communities. When conversion takes place, it diminishes agricultural production capacity, economic viability, and may detrimentally impact surrounding agricultural operations.

403.02    OBJECTIVES

- a.        To maintain and enhance the continued prosperity and growth of the agriculturally oriented segment of the County economy by:

- (1) Providing for long-term preservation and management of prime agricultural lands.
- (2) Assuring proper location and operation of those land uses which are potentially disruptive to the agricultural community.
- (3) Providing for necessary supportive services in the agricultural community.
- (4) Reducing the expansion of urban development on prime agricultural lands.

403.03    POLICIES

- a.        Special agricultural uses and related non-agricultural uses may be permitted subject to an approved conditional use permit. Conditions to be considered for a permit shall include, but not be limited to, the following:
- (1) Special operational standards and/or equipment to reduce adverse impacts of dust, feathers, or other problems for adjacent properties.





(2) Limitation on the size of the use, time of operation, or length of permit.

(3) The use shall have access to adequate transportation facilities without creating abnormally high traffic volumes.

(4) The use shall not have detrimental effects on the groundwater resource.

(5) The use shall be located near or readily accessible to a probable workforce.

(6) The use requires location in a non-urban area because of unusual site area requirements and/or operational characteristics.

(7) The use should not be sited on prime agricultural land if non-prime agricultural land is available in the vicinity of the proposed development.

b. Divisions of land will be controlled by zoning ordinance; however, they will be granted only when the land in question qualifies for conversion to intensive use. (Section 402)



404 GRAZING

404. 01 INTRODUCTION

Merced County has two prominent grazing areas (foothill pastures) located in the eastern and western part of the County, both serving as valuable watersheds. Land areas such as these are fragile and are best suited for non - intensive land uses. The physiographic features inherent to this type of land and the relative isolation from major population concentrations imposes limited land utilization.

Man's use of these areas must be carefully managed to prevent down-slope flood hazards and to prevent loss of wildlife habitat, grazing land, and other desirable open space functions.

404. 02 OBJECTIVES

- a. Preserve and enhance the value of the area for grazing, wildlife habitat, recreation, agricultural and other open space functions.
- b. Preserve and manage the land's watershed function to minimize erosion and flooding.
- c. Preserve the land's open space character.

404. 03 POLICIES

- a. The expansion of intensive land uses into the areas shall be discouraged.
- b. Exploration and recovery of mineral resources will occur under appropriate location and operational standards.
- c. Special agricultural uses and related non-agricultural uses may be permitted subject to an approved conditional use permit. Conditions to be considered for a permit shall include, but not be limited to, the following:
  - (1) Operational standards to reduce adverse impacts or other problems for adjacent properties.



(2) Limitation on the size of the use, time of operation, or length of permit.

(3) The use shall have access to adequate transportation facilities without creating abnormally high traffic volumes.

(4) The use shall not have detrimental effects on the groundwater resource.

(5) The use shall be located near or readily accessible to a probable workforce.

(6) The use requires location in a non-urban area because of unusual site area requirements and/or operational characteristics.

(7) The use should not be sited on prime agricultural land existing in the area.

d. Divisions of land will be controlled by zoning ordinance; however, they will be granted only when the land in question qualifies for conversion to intensive use. (Section 402)





Vol. II CIRCULATION ELEMENT

100 PURPOSE

The Circulation Element with its trafficways is designed to provide vehicular traffic movement of people and goods to serve the residents, business enterprises and traveling public within and through the County. All County routes and facilities should be interrelated to form a comprehensive system which connects all City, County, and Regional facilities.

101 SCOPE OF THE ELEMENT

This element confines itself to existing and proposed urban and rural collector and local trafficways of the county and is to be used in conjunction with the Merced County Regional Transportation Plan. It is correlated with the proposed use of lands projected by the land use element, scenic route element, and the conservation and open space elements. Standards for right of ways for major and minor collectors and local streets are established based on forecasted average daily trips to the year 1995 and projected land use. Typical street sections for rural and urban uses are delineated.

102 OBJECTIVES

- a. Develop a circulation system designed to provide freedom of movement for individuals and expedite movement, for delivery of goods and essential county services, within capabilities of normal traffic demands.
- b. Locate, design, and develop circulation facilities so as to conserve the natural beauty and existing character of the County and avoid adverse effects on adjoining uses of land.
- c. Promote the development of modes of transportation specifically suited to the needs of the County.



- d. Minimize the undesirable effects of through traffic on the County.
- e. Coordinate the circulation system with the city general plans to assure a fully integrated functional system.

103 **STANDARDS**

- a. To provide for safe and convenient travel throughout the County, the following classes of Rural Roads and Urban Streets are established:

Rural Roads

	R/W Width	ADT
4 lane Divided Collector	118'	more than 5, 000 ADT
2 lane Collector	80'	less than 5, 000 ADT
4 lane Undivided Rural Residential Collector	94'	more than 3, 000 ADT
2 lane Local Road	60'	less than 3, 000 ADT

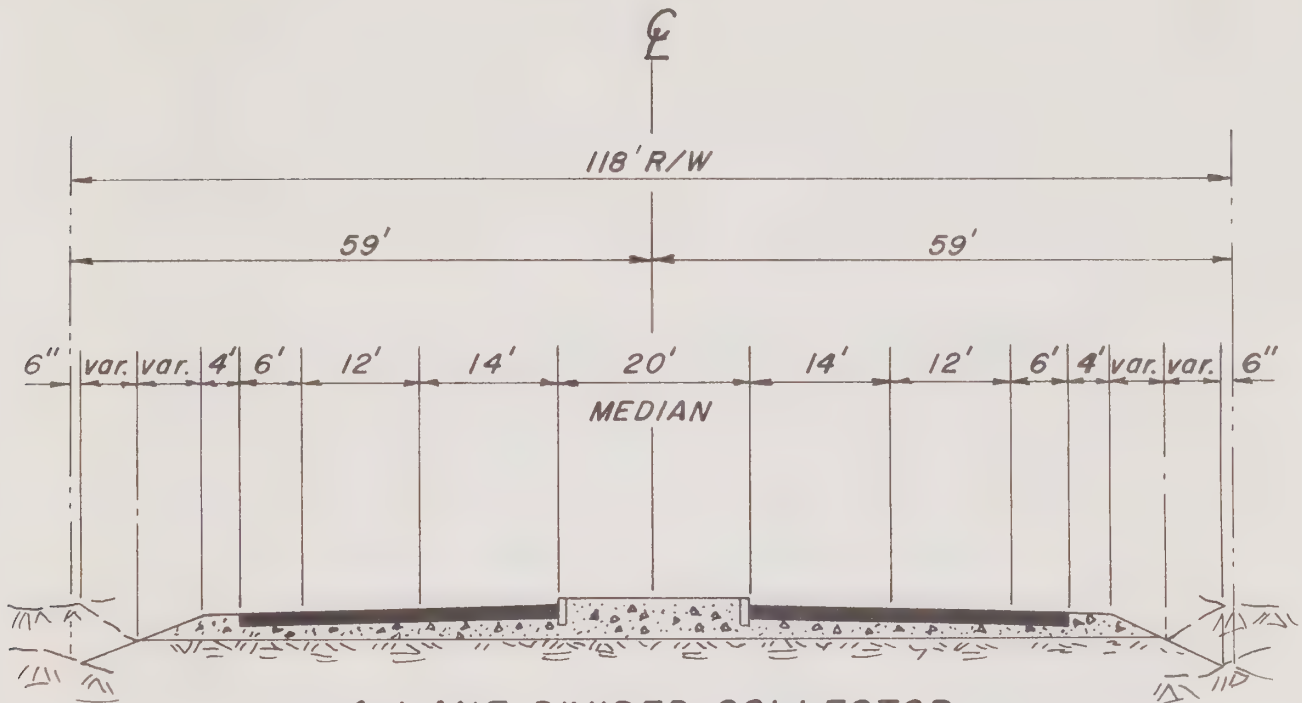
Urban Streets Within Urban Development Areas

	R/W Width	ADT
4 lane Divided Collector	118'	more than 5, 000 ADT
4 lane Undivided Collector	94'	more than 3, 000 ADT
2 lane Collector	80'	less than 3, 000 ADT
2 lane Local Street	60'	less than 3, 000 ADT
2 lane Local Street	52'	limited use

- b. Standards of curvatur, grade, alignment and site distance sha'll be conducive to safe, convenient travel on the various classes of trafficways.
- c. Individual lots of residential subdivisions with a frontage of less than 200 feet shall not have ingress-egress rights to collector trafficways.
- d. Improvements for trafficways shall be in accordance with typical street sections as shown on Plate Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4.



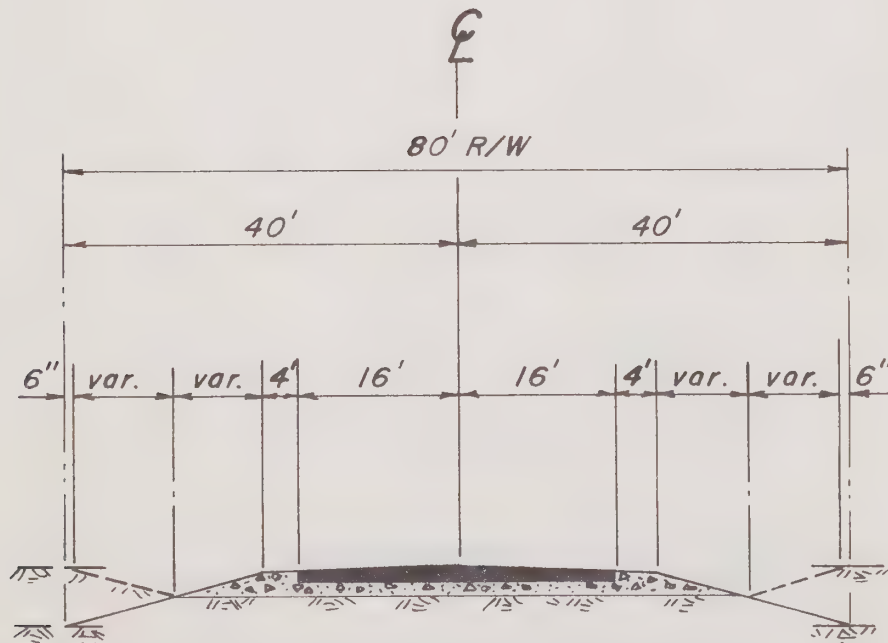
# TYPICAL RURAL ROAD SECTIONS



## 4 LANE DIVIDED COLLECTOR

118' R/W (OVER 5,000 A.D.T.)

(Subject to variations due to terrain and other factors)

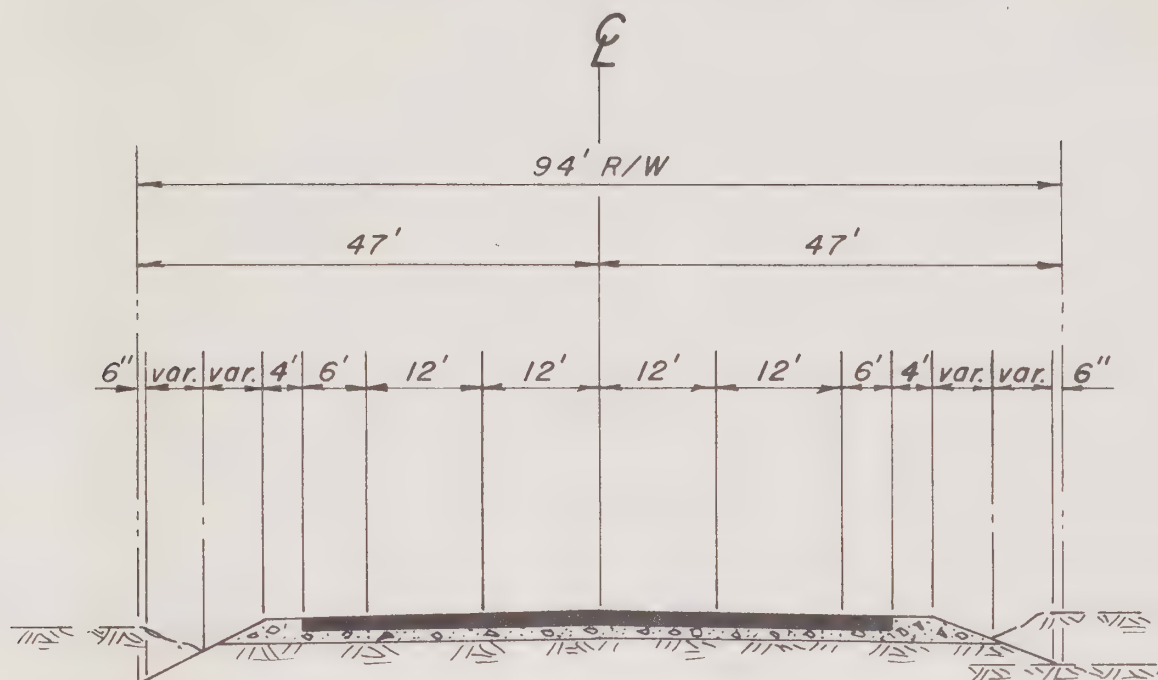


## 2 LANE COLLECTOR

(80' R/W UNDER 5,000 A. D. T.)

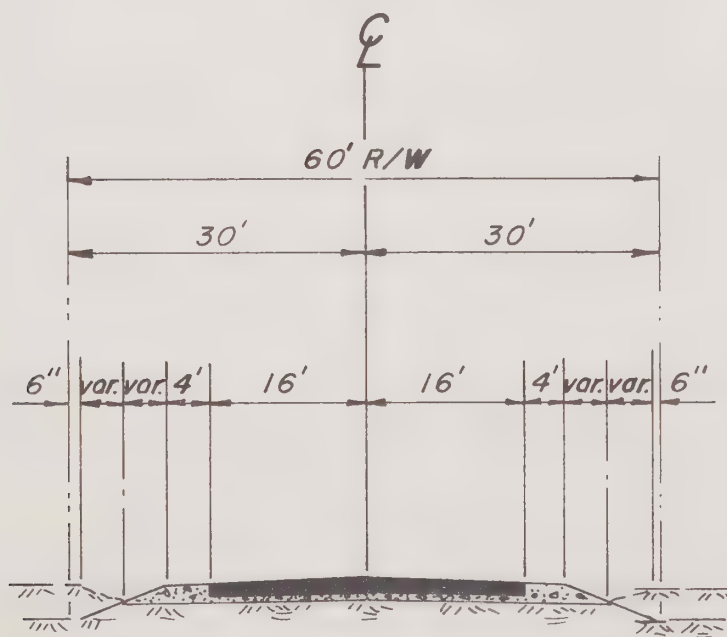


# TYPICAL RURAL ROAD SECTIONS



**4 LANE UNDIVIDED RURAL RESIDENTIAL COLLECTOR**  
**94' R/W (OVER 3,000 A.D.T.)**

*(Subject to variations due to terrain and other factors)*



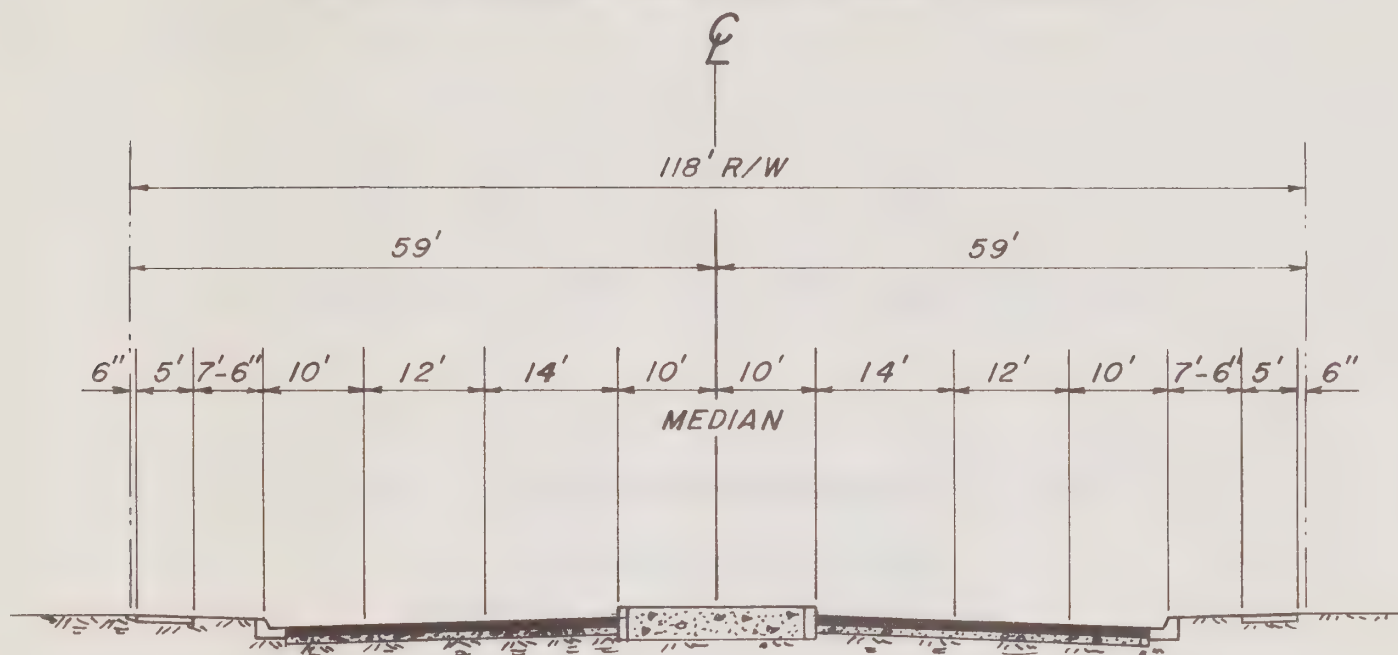
**2 LANE LOCAL ROAD**  
**(60' R/W UNDER 3,000 A.D.T.)**



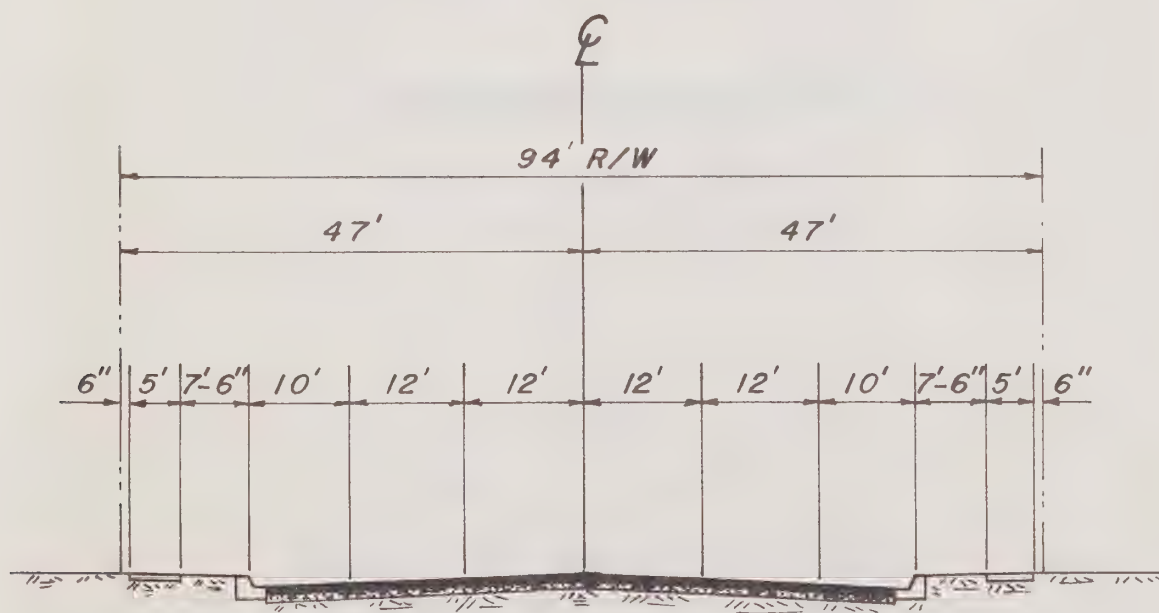


# TYPICAL URBAN STREET SECTIONS

## WITHIN URBAN DEVELOPMENT AREAS



**4 LANE DIVIDED COLLECTOR**  
**118' R/W (OVER 5,000 A.D.T.)**  
*(Subject to variations due to terrain and other factors)*

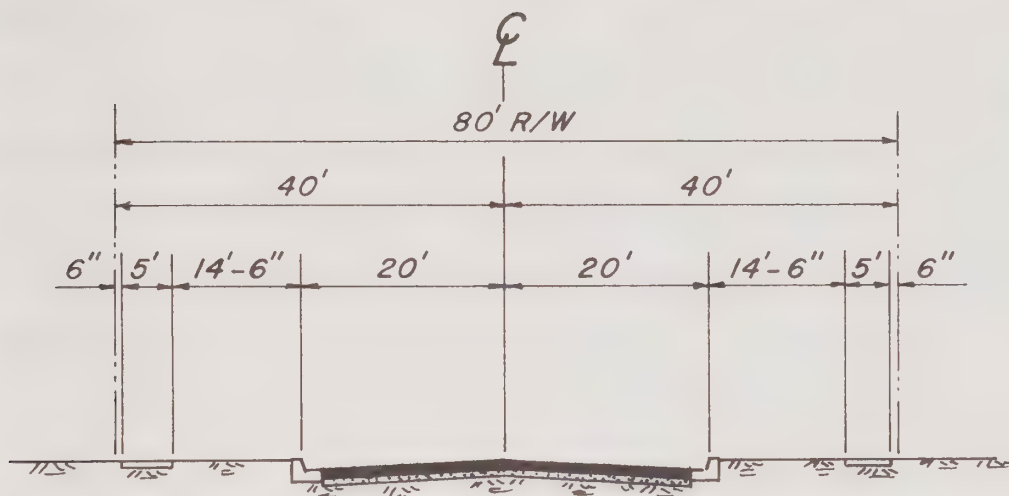


**4 LANE UNDIVIDED COLLECTOR**  
**94' R/W (OVER 3,000 A.D.T.)**  
*(Subject to variations due to terrain and other factors)*

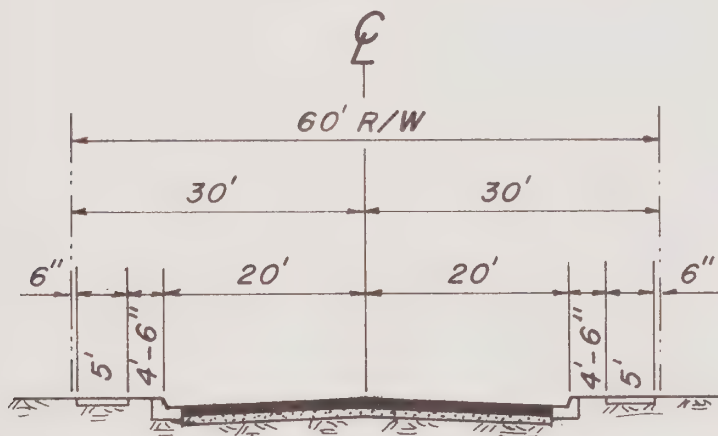


# TYPICAL URBAN STREET SECTIONS

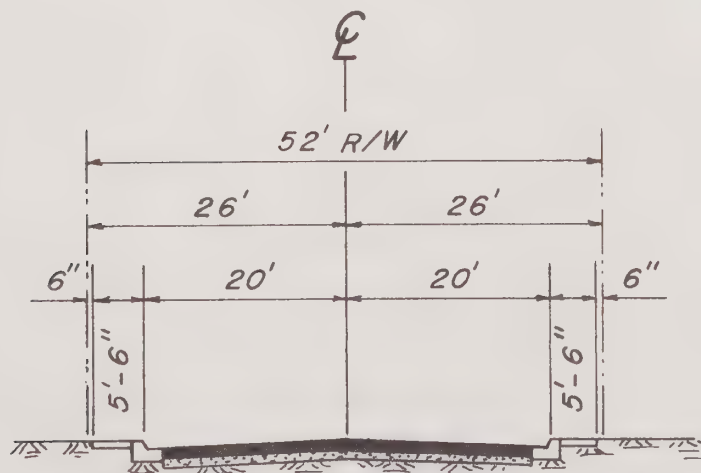
## WITHIN URBAN DEVELOPMENT AREAS



2 LANE COLLECTOR  
80' R/W (UNDER 3,000 A. D. T.)



2 LANE LOCAL STREET  
60' R/W (UNDER 3,000 A. D. T.)



2 LANE LOCAL STREET CUL-DE-SAC  
(52' R/W)



SETBACKS

The setback for rural and residential roads, shown on the adopted Circulation Element shall be measured from the centerline of said road and shall be in an amount equal to  $\frac{1}{2}$  the ultimate width of the road on said plan plus whatever additional yard setback requirement of each respective zoning district.





U.C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES



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